



Question of the Week

Q. Help! What's making those ugly webs in my backyard trees, and what can I do about them?

A. Those ugly webs belong to the fall webworm, the larval form of a white moth that lays its eggs on the undersides of tree leaves. The eggs hatch into worms, which make the loosely woven, dirty tan webs that enclose entire branches of hardwood trees and shrubs. Wild cherries, fruit trees, elms and some maples are their favorites. Webworms strip the leaves as they feed, enlarging their nest as they need more food. A small tree can be entirely engulfed by the time cold weather arrives.

Because fall webworms attack late in the growing season, most leaves have completed much of their work (the manufacture of carbohydrates) for the season. Webworm nests are more of an aesthetic nuisance than a threat to the health of trees.

Although several pesticides on the market will control this pest, the easiest way to cope with fall webworms is to prune out and destroy their nests. Use a stick or pole with a nail inserted crosswise to snag and lift webs out of small trees. Sometimes you can knock the nests down with a well-aimed blast from the garden hose. Or you can simply let the webworms remain. Birds, insect predators and internal parasites usually hold them in check.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension's Family, Home & Garden Education Center Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu